

Research article

A century of East African raids: Anywa and Murle

Shimels Ayele Yalew.

Department of History and Heritage Management, Faculty of Social Sciences, Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

Corresponding author's email: shimelsaye21@gmail.com

Abstract: *The recurring cross-border raids and counter-raids in the border areas of south-western Ethiopia and south-eastern Sudan have been considered as a recent phenomenon. However, the findings of this study, based on content analysis of archival sources, travelers' accounts, books, articles and unpublished secondary materials, suggest that the raids have historical roots and extend much farther than current trends. As a result, the raids and counter-raids between the Anywa and the Murle were caused by economic, political, geographical and cultural factors. There was a period of hegemony in the raids, one after the*

other. The Anywa were dominant in the first half of the 20th century, but the Murle rose to dominance from the 1950s onwards. The raids have had an economic, political and social impact on the region.

Keywords: *Anywa, Murle, raid, borderland, Ethio-Sudan, history*

Article History: *Received 30 December, 2023; Accepted 21 October, 2024*

DOI:10.20372/ejss.v10i2.1930

1. Introduction

Africa has experienced cross-border incursions and raids for many years. Complex historical, social, economic and political developments have been at the root of intrusion and raiding. For example, the depletion of natural resources, the search for pasture and water, drought and famine, and weak border management have been some of the major causes of recurrent raids.¹ Similarly, cross-border raids have been taking place in various parts of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. The raids stem from colonial legacies, weaknesses in establishing a coercive state structure and economic backwardness. The colonial administration divided ethnic groups, restricted the mobility of pastoralists, imposed new tax regimes on local communities and disrupted local traditions. Rulers at different times had failed to control the peripheries effectively. The control of border areas was characterized by loose and indirect administration. Economically, Ethiopia's borderlands lagged behind areas closer to the political center.²

¹ Gatluak Ruon Jal, "Cross Border Conflict in Gambella Regional State (from 1991 to 2011): The Impacts of the Cross Border Conflicts in Gambella Regional State.," *Public Policy and Administration Research* 4, no. 6 (2014): 52.

² Allehone Mulugeta, "Conflict in the Horn: Prevention and Resolution," *Issues of Security and Conflict in the Ethiopian Frontiers: Notes on State Policies and Strategies*, 2002, 17.

People in the Ethio-Sudanese borderlands of the Baro Salient and Jonglei have also been engaged in raiding and counter-raiding for many years. The Baro Salient is vulnerable to raiding due to its border location, multi-ethnic composition, the influence of the Sudanese civil war, center-periphery dynamics and competition for resources.³ On the other hand, the Murle of Jonglei have been involved in conflicts with their neighbors, driven by competition over natural resources (water and land) and social resources such as cattle, women and children.⁴

However, studies of the conflict caused by regular raids in the Ethio-Sudanese borderlands have the following limitations. First, studies associate the origins of raiding and counter-raiding with the onset of colonialism.⁵ On the contrary, long before the arrival of the colonial powers, the Nilotic peoples of the area were engaged in raids for cattle, women and power.⁶ Second, the studies have placed more emphasis on recent developments than on the historical roots of the event.⁷ Third, studies have prioritized the domestic features of raids rather than their cross-border phenomenon.⁸ The study of raids and counter-raids in the border areas of the two countries from a historical perspective can, therefore, provide a better description of the conflict. As a result, this study aimed to reconstruct the historical development of cross-border raids between the Anywa of Ethiopia and the Murle of Sudan from the 1890s to the 1990s. More specifically, the study focuses on providing answers to the following questions;

- ◆ Why did the Anywa and Murle engage in cross-border raids?
- ◆ How were the Anywa and the Murle able to achieve a period of dominance?
- ◆ What was the impact of the cross-border raids?

³ Jon Harald Sande Lie and Axel Borchgrevink, "Layer upon Layer: Understanding the Gambella Conflict Formation," *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 6, no. 1/2 (2012): 135.

⁴ Ahmed Osman, "The Murle Tribe: An Analysis of Its Conflicts with the Nuer, Dinka and Government of South Sudan" (The Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO), 2015), 4.

⁵ Rachel Gordon, "Researching Livelihoods and Services Affected by Conflict, In the Eye of the Storm: An Analysis of Internal Conflict in South Sudan's Jonglei State" (London, 2014).

⁶ Robert Collins and Richard Herzog, "Early British Administration in the Southern Sudan," *The Journal of African History* 2, no. 1 (1961): 120.

⁷ Ruon Jal, "Cross Border Conflict in Gambella Regional State (from 1991 to 2011): The Impacts of the Cross Border Conflicts in Gambella Regional State."; Lie and Borchgrevink, "Layer upon Layer: Understanding the Gambella Conflict Formation."

⁸ Stephanie Riak Akuei and John Jok, "Child Abduction in Jonglei and Central Equatoria States, Southern Sudan" (Rift valley institute: A report for UNICEF, 2010); Osman, "The Murle Tribe: An Analysis of Its Conflicts with the Nuer, Dinka and Government of South Sudan"; Diana Felix Da Costa, "This Word, It Is for Murle, Not Meant for Other People: The Politics of Murle Identity, Experience of Violence and of the State in Boma, South Sudan" (PhD Dissertation, London, university of London, 2016).

2. Materials and Methods

This study is historical in design. Historical research is the systematic study of the past through the examination of various relevant source materials.⁹ Sources for historical research are traditionally divided into primary and secondary sources. Written primary sources include both archival documents and published sources.¹⁰ Therefore, archival documents from the Ethiopian Library and Archives Agency and travelers' accounts by British colonial officers in the region are the written primary sources used in the study. The sources are selected on the basis of accessibility. In addition, secondary sources used in this study include history books, articles, theses and web sources. Qualitative content analysis was applied on the collected sources. This analysis was chosen because of the nature of the sources.

2.1.The Anywa and Murle

The Anywa belong to the Shilluk-Luo group of Nilotic peoples. They have strong linguistic and cultural ties with the Shilluk. After being gradually pushed to the east by the Nuer, the Anywa settled in the area bounded by the Baro River to the north, the Pibor River to the west, and the Ajibur and Oboth Rivers to the south.¹¹ The majority of the Anywa live in Gambella, Ethiopia, but a small number of them live in Sudan (አኝዋኮች አብዛኞቹ በኢትዮጵያ ውስጥ ሲሆኑ በሱዳንም ይገኛሉ፡፡ የሞረያቸው አካባቢ በባሮ፣ በአሌሮ፣ በጊሎ፣ በሸቦ ወንዞች ዳርቻ ነው፡፡)¹²

There is evidence of ancient pastoral interests, evidenced by the presence of an elaborate vocabulary of cattle colour names, although the Anywa are now mainly an agricultural people with few cattle.¹³ According to the oral tradition of the Anywa, they do not have a large number of cattle due to both environmental and human factors. Environmentally, the presence of tsetse flies makes Anywa land inhospitable for cattle. In addition, frequent raids by neighboring tribes have depleted cattle resources.¹⁴ Despite this, the Anywa were still mainly dependent on agriculture at the time of the arrival of the various groups of travelers in the

⁹ W.H. McDowell, *Historical Research: A Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 5.

¹⁰ Anthony Brundage, *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2018), 17.

¹¹ Brundage, 17.

¹² Legese Woldemariam, "A Note to Illubabour Province Administrative Office," 1977, NALA.

¹³ Godfrey Lienhardt, "Anywa Village Headmen. I," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 27, no. 4 (1957): 342.

¹⁴ Conradin Perner, "'The Reward of Life Is Death': Warfare and the Anyuak of the Ethiopian-Sudanese Border," *Nomadic Peoples*, no. 32 (1993): 40.

area. They used to grow cotton, tobacco and cereals.¹⁵ They also established permanent settlements (አ ኙዋኮች በታላላቆች ወንዞች ዳርቻ ቋሚ መንደሮች ሰርተው በእረሻና በአሣ መጥመድ የ መታደሩ ሲሆን ...) unlike their neighbors such as Murle of Pibor and Nuer.¹⁶ Their tendency towards farming and permanent settlement was further substantiated by memos from the Ethiopian Ministry of Interior in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁷

On the other hand, the Murle live in Jonglei, Southern Sudan, an area bordering south-western Ethiopia.¹⁸ There is also a small number of the Murle in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Murle live in Nyangatom District. Several sources indicate that the Murle migrated from Ethiopia to southern Sudan. According to these sources, their migration was gradual. First, they lived in a place called Jen. They then moved to Lake Turkana along the Omo River. Finally, they turned west and arrived in their current homeland.¹⁹ According to the Murle tradition, both the Ethiopian and Sudanese lived together. They also believe that Jen, which lies to the east of Maji in Ethiopia, was their original place of settlement. Their claim is also supported by linguistic evidence. Surma-speaking people (Murle, Didinga, Longarim, Bale and Zilmanu) lived on both sides of the Maji massif until 2,000 BC.²⁰

The name Murle is taken from the people themselves. This name became common after the arrival of the British in Murle land. They have names given to them by their neighbors based on their interactions. Many of their neighbors call them Moden, which means enemy. It was given because of the harsher relationship and frequent raids by the Murle against their neighbors. They are also called Bier by the Dinka and Ajiba by the Anywa.²¹ The Murle share their borders with the Denka to the west, the Nuer to the north, and the Anywa to the east. They are gradually moving to the north-west and are displacing the Lou Nuer. Unlike other

¹⁵ Bahiru Zewudie, "Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier 1898-1935" (PhD Dissertation, London, university of London, 1976), 12.

¹⁶ Woldemariam, "A Note to Illubabour Province Administrative Office."

¹⁷ Abera G/Egziabhere, "A Memo about Pastoralists from Illubabour Province Administrative Office to Ministry of Interior.," 1983, NALA.

¹⁸ Tsehay Desta, "A Memo to Ministry of Interior," 1956, NALA.

¹⁹ Yntiso Gebre, "Ethnic Boundary Making in East Africa: Rigidity and Flexibility among the Nyangatom People," *African Study Monographs*, 37, no. 4 (2016): 148–52.

²⁰ Elizabeth H. Andretta, "Symbolic Continuity, Material Discontinuity, and Ethnic Identity among Murle Communities in the Southern Sudan," *Ethnology* 28, no. 1 (1989): 25.

²¹ Arensen Jonathan, "The History of Murle Migrations," 1964, 1, <https://www.cmi.no/file/1964-Murle.pdf>.

tribes, elders are not decision-makers on critical Murle issues.²² Communication between the Murle and their neighbors was limited, except for occasional raids.²³

The Murle are grouped in two based on their economy. Lowland pastoralists settled around the Lotilla River, Pibor River, Veveno River, Kengen River, Maruwo and Labarad Hills. Highland farmers lived in the Boma plateaus. The lowlanders are known as Lotillanya, derived from the name of the river where they live. They own numerous herds of cattle. They had a tradition of building temporary dry season camps.²⁴ Similarly, the highlanders were known as Ngalam (one without cattle).²⁵ The basic difference between the Boma and Pibor Murle lies in livelihoods, settlement patterns, attitudes towards land, division of labor and marriage negotiations.²⁶

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The causes for the raids

Several political, economic and cultural factors have contributed to cross-border cattle raiding among the Anyway and Murle peoples of the Ethio-Sudanese borderlands. The Ethio-Sudanese borderlands remained under loose administration for many years. This was due to local resistance, the lack of sufficient security forces in the border areas and their geographical remoteness from political centers. Some ethnic groups in the Ethio-Sudanese borderlands resisted the introduction of coercive central political authority. Their resistance often took the form of rebellion against central authority appointees. The Anywa and the Murle were among the ethnic groups that resisted the imposition of authorities.²⁷ As a result, several patrols and military operations were conducted by the respective governments to control the Anywa and the Murle. The patrols and operations became effective only after 1928.²⁸

²² Osman, "The Murle Tribe: An Analysis of Its Conflicts with the Nuer, Dinka and Government of South Sudan," 6–7.

²³ H. H. Kelly, "The Beir Country," *The Geographical Journal* 40, no. 5 (1912): 501.

²⁴ Kelly, 500.

²⁵ Phillip T. Manyok, "Cattle Rustling and Its Effects among Three Communities (Dinka, Murle and Nuer) in Jonglei State, South Sudan" (PhD Dissertation, Fort Lauderdale-Davie, Nova Southeastern University, 2017), 10.

²⁶ Andretta, "Symbolic Continuity, Material Discontinuity, and Ethnic Identity among Murle Communities in the Southern Sudan," 25.

²⁷ "Bringing Clarity to Crisis, Red Lines: Upheaval and Containment in the Horn of Africa," *ACLEDA* (blog), 2021, 24, <https://acleddata.com/2021/01/21/red-lines-upheaval-and-containment-in-the-horn-of-africa/>.

²⁸ Zewudie, "Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier 1898-1935," 61.

The raids and counter raids survived after patrols and operations due to the absence of sufficient security forces in the area. A report from the Illubabour province administrative office refers to this problem.

እነዚህን ወንበዴዎች ለማላከል በአካባቢው ቋሚ ጦር ካለ መኖሩም በላይ በክልሉ የተመደቡት የህዝባዊ ፖሊስ አባሎች ቁጥር እጅግ በጣም አነስተኛ በመሆኑ ወንበዴዎች እንደልባቸው ወሰን እየጣሱ ገብተው አደጋ እያደረሱ ለመወጣት መቻላቸው ተገልጿል፡፡²⁹

These bandits cross the international boundary easily and raid due to the absence of a permanent army in the area and a limited number of regional police officers to check their movement.

Both the Anywa and the Murle were geographically remote from the political center. In addition to geographical remoteness, they were inaccessible because of limited infrastructure. The Anywa of Ethiopia inhabit in the hot and lowland areas.³⁰ The Murle also live in the inaccessible areas of southern Sudan. Geographical and climatic factors have thus contributed to the difficulty of establishing administrative structures. In turn, the protection of peace and security through legal processes has been futile.³¹

The Sudanese civil wars and their aftermath were the other political factors. The civil wars in Sudan exacerbated cross-border raids. According to the then Ethiopian Ministry of Interior's memo, the Sudanese civil wars had an impact on security in Gambella. It reads: ቀደም ሲል ደቡብ ሱዳን በፖለቲካ ውዝግብ ተወጥሮ በነበረበት ረጅም ጊዜ ጋምቤላ አያሌ ስደተኞች ከማስተናገዱ ሌላ አልፎ አልፎ የችግሩ ውሸንፍር...³² (This means that the plunge of Southern Sudan into political turmoil led to the arrival of refugees in Gambella. In addition, Gambella was disturbed by the expansion of the conflict). The civil wars increased access to weapons, created a sense of revenge among the younger generation and weakened government structures. In addition, the introduction of new fighting techniques, the abandonment of traditional conflict resolution and the interest in getting more cattle for bride-

²⁹ Tilahun Abebe, "Report from Illubabor Province Administrative Office.," 1988, NALA.

³⁰ "S/E/P/M/G/ Gambella Awuraja Ministry of Agriculture Branch Office Note to Illubabour Province Ministry of Agriculture Branch Office, Metu," 1982, NALA.

³¹ Gordon, "Researching Livelihoods and Services Affected by Conflict, In the Eye of the Storm: An Analysis of Internal Conflict in South Sudan's Jonglei State," 2.

³² Getahun Tesema, "A Memo, to Tsahafe Tezaze Aklilu Habtewold (Minister of the Ministry of Pen and Prime Minister of Ethiopia)," 1973, NALA.

wealth exacerbated the problem. As a result, cattle raiding and the abduction of children and women have increased.³³

In economic terms, the Anywa and Murle have been involved in raiding due to underdevelopment. Economically, the border areas of Ethiopia and Southern Sudan have experienced underdevelopment compared to areas closer to the political center.³⁴ The Anywa and Murle have experienced various forms of crop destruction and loss of livestock. Environmental factors such as drought and flooding have often led to famine.³⁵ The area around the Pibor River is a plain that can be flooded during the rainy season from May to October.³⁶ The flooding of this river often destroys villages and crops. They then turn to raiding their neighbors in times of loss of livestock and reduced harvests.

In addition, the cattle of the Murle were decimated by disease and by frequent conflicts. The disease was known as smallpox, a lung disease of cattle and sheep characterized by inflammation of the lungs and caused by the bacterium *Mycoplasma mycoides*. The Murle also used to be raided by the Toposa.³⁷ Furthermore, the eastern part of Gambella below the escarpment, where the majority of the Anywa live, was a difficult place to keep cattle because of the tsetse fly. The fly carries trypanosomes. As a result, they had to resort to raiding to alleviate the shortage of cattle.³⁸

Cultural factors such as competition between age groups, the need for higher social status, the demand for payment as bride-wealth, and the need to have children and families are the dominant reasons for raiding among the Anywa and Murle. The demand for cattle, women and children by the Murle was greater than that of the Anywa. The Anywa political and economic system has been relatively stable. Politically they were not divided into age groups and economically they were agriculturalists. For the Murle, on the other hand, competition

³³ Osman, "The Murle Tribe: An Analysis of Its Conflicts with the Nuer, Dinka and Government of South Sudan," 8–10.

³⁴ Mulugeta, "Conflict in the Horn: Prevention and Resolution," 17.

³⁵ Tasew Gashaw, "Cross-Border Intergroup Conflicts in the Horn of Africa: A Case Study of Ethiopia-South Sudan Borderland People," *Southern Voices Network for Peace Building Scholar*, 2017, 2–3, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-southern-voices-network-for-peacebuilding>. Wilson Center - Africa.

³⁶ D. Hay Thorburn, "The Pibor River," *The Geographical Journal* 60, no. 3 (1922): 211.

³⁷ Jonathan, "The History of Murle Migrations," 2.

³⁸ E. E. Evans Pritchard, "Further Observations on the Political System of the Anywa," *Sudan Notes and Records*, no. 28 (1947): 71.

between age groups, the need for higher social status and the demand for payment as bride-wealth were the strongest factors for raiding.³⁹

Adult Murle men, particularly in Pibor, had the responsibility of raising their own families. The primary input for this responsibility was cattle ownership. Cattle are important for marriage through the payment of bride-wealth. Marriage is delayed for adult men who fail to gather at least 40 heads of cattle, except during difficult times days when there is disease, drought and raiding.⁴⁰ As a result, the adult Murle must participate in raids on neighbors to meet the requirements for marriage.

Children are strongly demanded by the Murle to provide more cattle, potential support in old age and to continue the family line. As a result, childlessness due to infertility and infant and maternal mortality were addressed through adoption and abduction.⁴¹ Although not justified by scientific studies, the Murle suffered from infertility. It was believed that infertility led them to start abducting children.⁴² Abducted and traded children were also used as payment for blood in personal, intra-tribal and inter-tribal conflicts. They used cattle to obtain children through exchange. This was particularly important from the 1950s to 1970, when the Murle faced infertility.⁴³

3.2.The age of Anywa dominance

Recent media coverage and extensive raids on the Murle have overshadowed Anywa raids on the Murle in the past. The Anywa had been raiding the Murle for many years.⁴⁴ In the first half of the 20th century, the Anywa also gained the upper hand in raiding land and property owned by the Murle. The introduction of firearms to the Anywa and successive British patrols against the Murle were the main factors in Anywa dominance. The Anywa were involved in the trade of ivory firearms with the Ethiopian highlanders.⁴⁵ Anywa and highlander trade

³⁹ Gordon, "Researching Livelihoods and Services Affected by Conflict, In the Eye of the Storm: An Analysis of Internal Conflict in South Sudan's Jonglei State," 7.

⁴⁰ Andretta, "Symbolic Continuity, Material Discontinuity, and Ethnic Identity among Murle Communities in the Southern Sudan," 19.

⁴¹ Judith McCallum, "Murle Identity in Post-Colonial South Sudan" (PhD Dissertation, Toronto, York University, 2013), 164–68.

⁴² Richard B Rands and Matthew LeRiche, "Security Responses in Jonglei State in the Aftermath of Inter-Ethnic Violence," 2012, 4.

⁴³ Akuei and Jok, "Child Abduction in Jonglei and Central Equatoria States, Southern Sudan," 23.

⁴⁴ Alebachew wondyirad, "A Plan to the Development of Gambella," 1975, NALA.

⁴⁵ Eisei Kurimoto, "Natives and Outsiders: The Historical Experience of the Anywa of Western Ethiopia," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, no. 43 (1992): 12.

relations date back to the 19th century. The Anywa had established trade contacts with the Oromo. The items exchanged were cotton from the Anywa and beads from the Oromo.⁴⁶

The presence of abundant elephants around Akobo also enabled the chiefs of Anywa to collect ivory, which was important in the trade for firearms.⁴⁷ They obtained large numbers of guns and ammunition through trade with Ethiopian government officials at Gore and Sayo.⁴⁸ The introduction of firearms to the Anywa led to the rise of hegemonic chiefs over a group of villages that had not been seen before. For example, Udial, Illimi and Akwei were well known. In turn, the hegemonic chiefs used their power in raids on the land and property of the Murle. By 1911, for example, the Anywa were estimated to possess between 10,000 and 25,000 rifles.⁴⁹ They also carried out major raids on areas held by the Murle in the same year.⁵⁰

The British had been conducting futile pacification campaigns against the Murle since 1908. However, the campaign was successful after the 1911-1912 vindictive expedition.⁵¹ The arrival of British patrols among the Murle led to the loss of political sovereignty, disarmament, the removal of power from traditional leaders and the end of military expansion in the region.⁵² In addition, the British patrols and the subsequent imposition of colonial administration from the Pibor post led to weak chiefs and undermined the age-set system. As a result, the frequency and scale of raids diminished, except for a few years in which they were carried out in revenge.⁵³ This helped the armed Anywa to gain the upper hand over the Murle in raiding.

In the early 20th century, the Anywa had raided the Murle, returning with children, women and cattle.⁵⁴ The raids and counter-raids were annual and continuous, but the raids mentioned here are only the recorded ones. The first recorded Anywa raid on the land of the Murle took place after the turn of the 20th century. It was in 1911 that the Anywa raided the area held by the

⁴⁶ Zewudie, "Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier 1898-1935," 12.

⁴⁷ Zewudie, 109.

⁴⁸ Kurimoto, "Natives and Outsiders: The Historical Experience of the Anywa of Western Ethiopia," 13.

⁴⁹ Zewudie, "Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier 1898-1935," 108-12.

⁵⁰ Kurimoto, "Natives and Outsiders: The Historical Experience of the Anywa of Western Ethiopia," 10.

⁵¹ Collins and Herzog, "Early British Administration in the Southern Sudan," 131.

⁵² Andretta, "Symbolic Continuity, Material Discontinuity, and Ethnic Identity among Murle Communities in the Southern Sudan," 26.

⁵³ Akuei and Jok, "Child Abduction in Jonglei and Central Equatoria States, Southern Sudan," 22.

⁵⁴ Lienhardt, "Anywa Village Headmen. I," 342.

Murle for cattle. The Anywa also launched a major raid in 1914, covering a very large area. After the raid they returned with large numbers of cattle and prisoners from the Murle.⁵⁵

In March 1932, the Ciro Anywa of the Gila-Akobo area carried out two major raids on Murle's land. Twenty-seven people were killed, 27 women and 55 children were captured, and 800 head of cattle were taken. The British administration in the region blamed the Ethiopian government and demanded compensation. As a result, the Gambella Conference was held in June 1931. After the conference, Ras Mulugeta and Fitawurary Hailewariam representing the imperial government agreed to pay compensation to the victims from Murle.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the Anywa raided Ojwa Murle's land in 1973. They killed many and took cattle and children.⁵⁷ The above-mentioned events are only the recorded and major ones. However, there had been frequent minor incidents of raiding done by the Anywa.

3.3.The Murle ascendancy

The Murle had been threatening their neighbors by raiding cattle, women and children since the early nineteenth century.⁵⁸ The annual raids by the Murle against their neighbors were recorded after colonial agents arrived in the area in 1899. The raids have included the capture of women and cattle.⁵⁹ They have been raiding the Anywa of Gambella for many years. A report from the Illubabour Provincial Administration indicates the incident of Murle raids on the Anywa.

እነዚህ ሠርጌ ገብየአጃባ ወንበዴዎች ነዋሪነታቸው በሱዳን ውስጥ ሲሆን በአሣቻ ቦታና ሰዓት ለብዙ ዘመናት ድንበር እየጣሱ በጦረፍ አካባቢ የሚገኙት ዜጎችን ላይ ድንገተኛ አደጋ እየጣሉ የዘረፉ ተግባር ሲያካሂዱ የቆዩ ሲሆን አሁንም በዚሁ ተግባራቸው ገፍተውታል፡፡ በአብዛኛው ዝርፊያ የሚካሄዱትም በአካባቢው በግንጽ ጆር ወረዳዎች ክልል ነው።⁶⁰

The Ajuba intruder lives in Sudan. They have been launching unconditional raids on Ethiopian citizens for many years. They also continued raids to the 1990s. Most of the raids by the Ajuba were in the districts of Akobo, and Gog and Jor

There are two important points in the quoted report. These are the areas subject to annual raids by the Murle and the timing of the raids. The districts of Gog and Jor and Akobo were

⁵⁵ Perner, “‘The Reward of Life Is Death’: Warfare and the Anyuak of the Ethiopian-Sudanese Border,” 42.

⁵⁶ Zewudie, “Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier 1898-1935,” 156–57.

⁵⁷ Perner, “‘The Reward of Life Is Death’: Warfare and the Anyuak of the Ethiopian-Sudanese Border,” 43.

⁵⁸ Akuei and Jok, “Child Abduction in Jonglei and Central Equatoria States, Southern Sudan,” 21.

⁵⁹ Robert O. Collins, “Patrols Against the Beirs,” *Sudan Notes and Records* 41 (1960): 38.

⁶⁰ Abebe, “Report from Illubabor Province Administrative Office.”

predominantly inhabited by the Anywa. The majority of the Anywa lived in Gog and Jor District. They were estimated to number 32070 in 1978.⁶¹ The Murle have also continued to raid the Ethiopian Anywa for many years. However, the Murle raids were not limited to Anywa areas. They have also raided other ethnic groups from the Gambella Awraja and Mocha Awraja. For example, in 1988, Murle armed groups raided the Chai in Ethiopia. During the raid, they killed many people and took almost all the cattle of the Chai.⁶²

Nevertheless, the Murle's annual raids intensified in the second half of the 20th century. The rise of the Murle in the annual raids was the result of several factors. The first and most important factor was the Sudanese civil war. The civil war in southern Sudan exacerbated the Murle's involvement in raiding the land of their neighbors because of the introduction of modern weapons that replaced traditional tools.⁶³ After the event that sparked the Anya-Nya movement in 1955, arms proliferation, subsequent raids and counter-raids were common in the Ethiopian-Sudanese borderlands.⁶⁴ During the period of peace in the 1970s, raids by the Murle were minimal. However, when the conflict resumed after 1983, they carried out more than eight raids on neighbors within a year.⁶⁵ Following the abrogation of the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement by the President of Sudan, there were widespread rebellions and desertions in the Bor, Pibor and Pachalla garrisons in Southern Sudan.⁶⁶

The Murle in Pibor had a grievance against the Nuer- and Denka-dominated SPLA's plundering and abuses. So, they organized a local militia known as the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), led by Ismael Konyi, and formed an alliance with the government in Khartoum.⁶⁷ The PDF had its roots in community policing youth organizations to prevent crime among the Murle. Gradually, the threat of the SPLA forced the leaders to transform the community policing youth into the PDF. The Sudanese government had also provided significant support to the force. Uniforms and firearms, for example, were conspicuously provided by the government.⁶⁸ In retaliation against the SPLA and the then Ethiopian regime,

⁶¹ Lema G/ Mariam, "A Memo to Bitwoded Zewudie G/Hiwot (Ministry of Interior)," 1970, NALA.

⁶² "Evil Days, 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia" (An Africa Watch Report, 1991), 322–23.

⁶³ Osman, "The Murle Tribe: An Analysis of Its Conflicts with the Nuer, Dinka and Government of South Sudan," 17.

⁶⁴ Gordon, "Researching Livelihoods and Services Affected by Conflict, In the Eye of the Storm: An Analysis of Internal Conflict in South Sudan's Jonglei State," 1.

⁶⁵ Rands and LeRiche, "Security Responses in Jonglei State in the Aftermath of Inter-Ethnic Violence," 6.

⁶⁶ Regassa Bayissa, "The Derg-SPLM/A Cooperation: An Aspect of Ethio-Sudan Proxy Wars," *EJOSSAH* V, no. 2 (2007): 20.

⁶⁷ Costa, "This Word, It Is for Murle, Not Meant for Other People: The Politics of Murle Identity, Experience of Violence and of the State in Boma, South Sudan," 9.

⁶⁸ Costa, 24.

the Sudanese government had armed several groups closer to the international border, such as the Murle. The Ethio-Sudanese border was disrupted by rebel activity against the Sudanese government. Moreover, the Sudanese government launched a counter-insurgency against the rebels. This includes members of the Murle militia.⁶⁹

The other major factor was the infertility and drought that the Murle faced in the second half of the 20th century. The Murle had been suffering from infertility since the 1960s. The cause of infertility was the introduction of sexually transmitted diseases by the army and the sexual practices of the younger generation. By the end of the first civil war, venereal diseases had become so widespread in the Pibor area that fertility levels had plummeted.⁷⁰ As a result, the Murle carried out devastating raids on the land and property of the Anywa. Their raids became more frequent and more devastating in the 1980s. According to the Illubabour Provincial Administrative Office report, more than 300 Murle raided Ujulu Kebele in Gog and Jor District in May 1988.

የአጃባ ወንበዴዎች በጎጥና ጆረ ወረዳ ኡጁሉ በተባለው ቀበሌ ገበሬ ማኅበር ክልል ውስጥ በ8/9/80 ብዙ ታቸው ከ300 እስከ 500 የሚሆኑ ዘመናዊ የጦር መሳሪያ የታጠቁ በቀበሌው ኗሪ ላይ ድንገተኛ አደጋ ጥለው 7 ወንዶችንና 18 ሴቶችን ገደለው 4 ወዶችን በማቅሰል 5 ሕፃናትን አፍነው ከመውሰዳቸውም በላይ 1 ከላሽን ኮፕ 4 ሞክሮች ጠመንጃዎችን ከኗሪው ሕዝብ ላይ ዘርፈው ወስደዋል፡፡⁷¹

The Murle crossed into Ethiopian territory in May 1988. They attacked the village of Ujulu in Gog and Jor district. Their number is estimated between 300 and 500. They were armed with modern firearms. In the foray attack, around seven men and eight women were murdered. In addition, four men were wounded and five children kidnapped. Moreover, the raiders had taken one AK47 and four Moskovich rifles from the community.

In the same year, more than 7,000 heads of cattle from the villages of Mekot and Tailut in Jikow district were driven off by the Murle. On their way to Sudan, the cattle were held by the Ethiopian Anywa, but the Anywa fought each other over the division of the cattle. Three Anywa died as a result. In addition, in May 1988, the Murle attacked Anywa militias moving from Tergol to Aferwang in Akobo County. In the incident, an unknown number of Murle

⁶⁹ “Evil Days, 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia,” 322–23.

⁷⁰ McCallum, “Murle Identity in Post-Colonial South Sudan,” 168.

⁷¹ Abebe, “Report from Illubabor Province Administrative Office.”

injured one man and four militias were separated for an extended period.⁷² The Sudanese government forces were also blamed for supporting the Murle raids.⁷³

3.4.Repercussions of the raids

Cross-border cattle raiding or rustling had several effects. It had economic, political and social consequences. Economically, the loss of livestock, the burning of crops and houses, and the food insecurity caused by the conflict were the most devastating. The cross-border incursion had an impact on the political life of the society by weakening the state structure. As a result, society's confidence in the government was undermined. At the social level, the raids resulted in the displacement of many people, countless deaths, the abduction of children and the separation of families.⁷⁴

Similarly, the annual cross-border raids by the Anywa and Murle had economic, social and political consequences. The economic losses were deeper and more recurrent than the social and political consequences. These raids involved the theft of large herds of cattle. In March 1932, for example, the Ciro Anywaa of the Gila-Akobo area carried out two major raids on areas held by the Murle and 800 hundred cattle were captured.⁷⁵ In addition, more than 7000 heads of cattle were taken from villages in Gambella by the Murle.⁷⁶ The other major economic impact was the destruction of property and crops during the raids. A secret memo from the Illubabor provincial administration illustrates the destructions. It reads የ አ ኮ ቦ ህዝብ የ ዘንድሮ ሰብሉ በመጥፋቱ---ምክንያት ችግር ላይ ወድቋል፡፡ 'The people of Akobo are in acute food shortage due to the destruction of crops... caused by the raiding Murle'.⁷⁷ The severity of cattle raiding and crop destruction sometimes led to emigration and famine.⁷⁸

Politically, the cross-border raids had created instability and insecurity in the region. People in the area felt a sense of insecurity. Sometimes these raids involved rebels from each country, complicating the stability of the region. The incursion of Sudanese forces into Gambella in 1975 was a notable example. Members of the Sudanese military had attacked and looted

⁷² Abebe.

⁷³ Meharene Minda, "Secret Memo to the Office of Chairman of the Provisional Military Government and Ministry of Defense.," 1976, NALA.

⁷⁴ Ruon Jal, "Cross Border Conflict in Gambella Regional State (from 1991 to 2011): The Impacts of the Cross Border Conflicts in Gambella Regional State.," 52.

⁷⁵ Zewudie, "Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier 1898-1935," 156.

⁷⁶ Abebe, "Report from Illubabor Province Administrative Office."

⁷⁷ Minda, "Secret Memo to the Office of Chairman of the Provisional Military Government and Ministry of Defense."

⁷⁸ "A Report about Akobo from Illubabor Province Administrative Office to Mr Taye Reta (Coordinator of Development for Peripheral Sub Provinces)," 1976, NALA.

Ethiopian citizens in the Akobo district of Gambella Awuraja. The attack took place about five kilometres from the international border. More than 250 heads of cattle and 300 goats were taken in the attack.⁷⁹ The other impact of cross-border raids had been the separation of families as women and children were targets. The raids often separated mothers and children from their families. In 1932, the Anywa had taken 27 women and 55 children from the Murle.⁸⁰ In addition, the Murle had taken women and children from the Anywa in successive raids.⁸¹

4. Conclusion.

Cross-border raiding was common in the Ethio-Sudanese borderlands. The Anywa of Ethiopia and the Murle of Sudan were among the borderland peoples who for many years engaged in frequent raids and counter-raids. The raids between the Anywa and the Murle are historic. The practice is not the result of recent geopolitical dynamics. It is an age-old experience caused by the absence of effective administration, geographical remoteness from the political center, the contagion of the Sudanese civil war, underdevelopment and the culture of the people. The extent of raiding by both the Anywa and the Murle varies from period to period. The Anywa dominated raiding in the first half of the 20th century due to the introduction of firearms and British patrols on the Murle. However, the Sudanese civil war, drought and infertility since the 1950s have tipped the balance in favor of the Murle. The raids had a severe impact on both the Anywa and the Murle. The main consequences were loss of livestock and property, destabilization of the borderlands and social impacts.

References

- A Report about Akobo from Illubabour Province Administrative Office to Mr Taye Reta (Coordinator of Development for Peripheral Sub Provinces), 1976. NALA.
- Abebe, Tilahun 1988. Report from Illubabor Province Administrative Office. 1988. NALA.
- ACLED 2021. Bringing Clarity to Crisis, Red Lines: Upheaval and Containment in the Horn of Africa. <https://acleddata.com/2021/01/21/red-lines-upheaval-and-containment-in-the-horn-of-africa/>.
- Akuei, Stephanie Riak, and John Jok2010. Child Abduction in Jonglei and Central Equatoria States, Southern Sudan. Rift valley institute: A report for UNICEF.
- Andretta, Elizabeth H 1989. Symbolic Continuity, Material Discontinuity, and Ethnic Identity among Murle Communities in the Southern Sudan. *Ethnology* 28(1): 17–31.
- Bayissa, Regassa 2007. The Derg-SPLM/A Cooperation: An Aspect of Ethio-Sudan Proxy Wars. *EJOSSAH* 5(2).

⁷⁹ Minda, "Secret Memo to the Office of Chairman of the Provisional Military Government and Ministry of Defense."

⁸⁰ Zewudie, "Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier 1898-1935," 156.

⁸¹ Abebe, "Report from Illubabor Province Administrative Office."

- Brundage, Anthony 2018. *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Collins, Robert, and Richard Herzog 1961. Early British Administration in the Southern Sudan. *The Journal of African History* 2(1): 119–35.
- Collins, Robert O 1960. Patrols Against the Beirs. *Sudan Notes and Records* 41: 35–58.
- Costa, Diana Felix Da 2016. This Word, It Is for Murle, Not Meant for Other People: The Politics of Murle Identity, Experience of Violence and of the State in Boma, South Sudan. PhD Dissertation, University of London.
- Desta, Tsehay 1956. A Memo to Ministry of Interior. NALA.
- “Evil Days, 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia.” An Africa Watch Report, 1991.
- G/ Mariam, Lema 1970. A Memo to Bitwoded Zewudie G/Hiwot (Ministry of Interior) NALA.
- Gashaw, Tasew 2017. Cross-Border Intergroup Conflicts in the Horn of Africa: A Case Study of Ethiopia-South Sudan Borderland People. *Southern Voices Network for Peace Building Scholar*. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-southern-voices-network-for-peacebuilding>. Wilson Center - Africa.
- Gebre, Yntiso 2016. Ethnic Boundary Making in East Africa: Rigidity and Flexibility among the Nyangatom People. *African Study Monographs* 37(4): 145–62.
- G/Egziabhere, Abera 1983. A Memo about Pastoralists from Illubabour Province Administrative Office to Ministry of Interior. NALA.
- Gordon, Rachel 2014. Researching Livelihoods and Services Affected by Conflict, In the Eye of the Storm: An Analysis of Internal Conflict in South Sudan’s Jonglei State. london.
- Jonathan, Arensen 1964. The History of Murle Migrations, <https://www.cmi.no/file/1964-Murle.pdf>.
- Kelly, H. H 1912. The Beir Country. *The Geographical Journal* 40(5): 497–501.
- Kurimoto, Eisei 1992. Natives and Outsiders: The Historical Experience of the Anywa of Western Ethiopia. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 43.
- Lie, Jon Harald Sande, and Axel Borchgrevink 2012. Layer upon Layer: Understanding the Gambella Conflict Formation. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 6(1/2) : 135–59.
- Lienhardt, Godfrey 1957. Anywa Village Headmen. I. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 27(4): 341–55.
- Manyok, Phillip T 2017. Cattle Rustling and Its Effects among Three Communities (Dinka, Murle and Nuer) in Jonglei State, South Sudan. PhD Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University.
- McCallum, Judith 2013. Murle Identity in Post-Colonial South Sudan. PhD Dissertation, York University.
- McDowell, W.H 2002. *Historical Research: A Guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Minda, Meharene 1976. Secret Memo to the Office of Chairman of the Provisional Military Government and Ministry of Defense. NALA.
- Mulugeta, Allehone 2002. Conflict in the Horn: Prevention and Resolution. Issues of Security and Conflict in the Ethiopian Frontiers: Notes on State Policies and Strategies.
- Osman, Ahmed 2015. The Murle Tribe: An Analysis of Its Conflicts with the Nuer, Dinka and Government of South Sudan. The Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO).
- Perner, Conradin 1993. The Reward of Life Is Death: Warfare and the Anyuak of the Ethiopian-Sudanese Border. *Nomadic Peoples*, 32: 39–54.
- Pritchard, E. E. Evans 1947. Further Observations on the Political System of the Anywa.” *Sudan Notes and Records*, 28: 62–97.
- Rands, Richard B, and Matthew LeRiche 2012. Security Responses in Jonglei State in the Aftermath of Inter-Ethnic Violence.

- Ruon Jal, Gatluak 2014. Cross Border Conflict in Gambella Regional State (from 1991 to 2011): The Impacts of the Cross Border Conflicts in Gambelia Regional State. *Public Policy and Administration Research* 4, (6): 52–61.
- S/E/P/M/G/ Gambella Awuraja Minstry of Agriculture Branch Office Note to Illubabour Province Minstry of Agriculture Branch Office, Metu, 1982. NALA.
- Tesema, Getahune 1973. A Memo, to Tsahafe Tezaze Aklilu Habtewold (Minister of the Ministry of Pen and Prime Minister of Ethiopia), NALA.
- Thorburn, D. Hay 1922. The Pibor River.” *The Geographical Journal* 60(3): 210–17.
- Woldemariam, Legese 1977. A Note to Illubabour Province Administrative Office, NALA.
- Wondyirad, Alebachew 1975. A Plan to the Development of Gambella, NALA.
- Zewudie, Bahiru 1976. Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier 1898-1935. PhD Dissertation, university of London.